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Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1886 (2009), in which the Council requested me to submit a report on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) every six months. The report covers the period from 1 March 2010 to 31 August 2010.

II. Major developments

A. Political developments

2. Three significant developments occurred during the reporting period that could have a great impact on future efforts by UNIPSIL to consolidate peace, security and prosperity in Sierra Leone. Firstly, the country appears to have already entered a pre-election mode, with the Government and the main political parties increasingly gearing their actions towards the 2012 elections. Secondly, the Government has accelerated initiatives to conclude a number of important mining agreements, through which Sierra Leone could become a major exporter of mineral resources. Thirdly, presidential elections in neighbouring Guinea could add a new democracy within the Mano River Basin with the advent of the first democratically elected Government in that country. While generating great benefits for Sierra Leone, these developments could also carry considerable inherent risks that bring new and complex challenges, which the Government, political parties and other political stakeholders in Sierra Leone will have to anticipate and manage in the immediate future.

Visit to Sierra Leone

3. At the invitation of President Ernest Bai Koroma, I visited Sierra Leone on 14 and 15 June, during which time I took the opportunity to launch, with the President, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) as an independent national broadcaster.

4. In meetings with President Koroma and his Cabinet, discussions focused on efforts by the Government to implement its Agenda for Change and achieve the

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Millennium Development Goals. The President assured me that the Millennium Development Goals feature prominently in the Government's overall strategy, which places special emphasis on infrastructure, education and health.

5. I also met with members of the diplomatic community, civil society representatives and leaders of the major political parties and visited the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The various stakeholders expressed appreciation for United Nations support and assistance, especially in the implementation of the Government's Agenda for Change. All the political parties encouraged the United Nations to remain engaged in consolidating peace in Sierra Leone. During my meeting with the United Nations country team, I was pleased to see that the integrated approach was being effectively operationalized by the United Nations family under the leadership of my Executive Representative.

6. While the country had clearly made important progress in consolidating peace and advancing a comprehensive development agenda, it was evident from my discussions with stakeholders that many challenges remain. Addressing youth unemployment, reinforcing weak democratic institutions, combating corruption and promoting national cohesion and unity are among the key challenges that require special attention, in particular as the country approaches the milestone elections in 2012.

Implementation of the joint communiqué

7. The implementation of the joint communiqué signed on 2 April continued during the reporting period. The Independent Review Panel, established pursuant to the joint communiqué signed between the main ruling All People's Congress (APC) and the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) to investigate the causes of the political violence in March 2009, submitted its report to President Koroma on 29 July. The Government is reviewing the Panel's report and is expected to issue a white paper in due course. The work of the Panel was supported with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund.

8. Other stipulations in the joint communiqué, including the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions, continued to be implemented. As part of the confidence-building measures implemented with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, repairs to SLPP headquarters, damaged during the political disturbances of March 2009, were completed.

9. In furtherance of the joint communiqué, and also with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, the All Political Parties Youth Association, which comprises the youth wings of the four main political parties — SLPP, APC, the Peoples' Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) and the National Democratic Alliance — was reactivated. The Association has helped to promote political tolerance in several by-elections and is expected to play a similar role in the 2012 elections.

10. Efforts to enhance the political participation of women in Sierra Leone culminated in the organization of meetings by the women's wings of APC, SLPP and PMDC to develop gender policies and action plans. SLPP has already adopted such a policy, while the other two parties are finalizing theirs with support from UNIPSIL and the Political Parties Registration Commission, and assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. The meetings provide a forum for discussions on the

attainment of a 30 per cent quota for women in elective office and those holding leadership positions in political parties and senior Government posts.

11. Notwithstanding the progress made in the implementation of the joint communiqué, the relationship between APC and SLPP remains strained and marked by a deeply rooted mistrust. On numerous occasions, my Executive Representative organized joint meetings with the major parties in an effort to improve their relationship. An important inter-party dialogue is planned before the end of the year.

12. As part of its conflict prevention and mitigation strategy, UNIPSIL arranged a high-level meeting between the Sierra Leone police and SLPP on 30 July. Various issues were discussed, including police recruitment, protection of party premises and prosecution of cases of political violence. Both sides agreed to put their previous difficulties behind them and continue to engage in dialogue. Furthermore, as envisaged under the joint communiqué, progress has been made towards the establishment of an independent police complaints committee, which will enhance public confidence in and ensure the accountability of the police.

Proposed inquest into the executions of 29 December 1992

13. On 28 May, the Government announced plans to hold an inquest into the executions on 29 December 1992, of a former Inspector-General of police and 27 others. The executions were carried out during the administration of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), a military regime that overthrew the APC Government in April 1992.

14. Concerns were raised that if the inquest were to be held, it could involve some prominent members of SLPP, the main opposition party, who held leading positions in the NPRC administration. The Government strongly emphasized that the inquest would be conducted to establish facts about the executions and to bring closure to the affected families. Nevertheless, SLPP objected to the Government's plan, noting that, among other things, it violated the amnesty granted under the Lomé Peace Agreement of 1999. Some civil society organizations and the National Human Rights Commission also expressed concerns that the planned inquest could lead to demands for inquiries into similar executions carried out by previous administrations. Furthermore, the planned inquest generated strong ethnically motivated and inflammatory attacks in the local media targeting both the opposition and the Government.

15. Following consultations with international partners and other stakeholders, my Executive Representative relayed to the Government their concerns that the planned inquest might impede efforts to sustain the momentum for political reconciliation and national cohesion. Since then, the Government has not disclosed whether or not it intends to proceed with the inquest.

Other developments

16. On 27 April, Sierra Leone celebrated the forty-ninth anniversary of its independence. In his speech, President Koroma stated that the bonds of unity were stronger than the issues that divided the country, irrespective of the political affiliation or the religious denomination of its citizenry.

17. On 3 June, President Koroma visited UNIPSIL headquarters and attended a meeting of the United Nations country team. During the meeting, the President

expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the United Nations and the Government to achieve development and stability in Sierra Leone. He reiterated his commitment to ensuring a change of attitude, in particular in the country's civil service.

18. By-elections for vacant parliamentary and local council seats were successfully conducted by the National Electoral Commission between March and June 2010. While most were held in a peaceful environment, a parliamentary by-election in Pujehun District was marked by tension and allegations that both SLPP and APC had resorted to the use of ex-combatants to intimidate the electorate. Also, the by-election results appeared to reinforce the perception of a deepening regional divide in Sierra Leone, with APC enjoying strong political support in the north and the west and SLPP in the south and the east. The results also indicate an apparent decline of PMDC, which has not won a election since 2008.

Preparations for the 2012 elections

19. In a letter addressed to my Executive Representative on 3 December 2009, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development requested technical and financial assistance from the United Nations for elections to be held in 2010, which will include presidential, parliamentary and local council elections.

20. In response to the Government's request, a joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Department of Political Affairs electoral needs assessment mission visited Sierra Leone in February. Following consultations with representatives of the National Electoral Commission, PPRC, key ministers, the police, civil society and other stakeholders, the mission recommended providing technical and financial assistance to the Government for the 2012 elections. It also observed that the potential for violence in the elections was high and that several mitigating measures would be required. Accordingly, UNIPSIL has undertaken a conflict and risk mapping exercise, through which a number of interventions to mitigate those risks have been proposed.

21. Following the mission's report, and in consultation with national stakeholders and donors, UNDP prepared a draft document outlining the support to the National Electoral Commission, PPRC, the police and the judiciary. Discussions have commenced with international partners on the assistance required for the 2012 election.

B. Security developments

22. The overall security situation remained calm during the reporting period. In August, the Government appointed a new Inspector-General of Police and a new Chief of Defence for the Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

23. The Government continued to deploy armed forces troops in support of United Nations peacekeeping operations in Darfur. At the national level, the armed forces continued to assist the police in dealing with violent crimes through the invocation of the Military Assistance to Civil Power Act by President Koroma.

24. Also during the reporting period, Sierra Leone's security sector agencies, including the armed forces and the police, carried out a joint exercise with the

United States Coast Guard focusing on the identification and interdiction of ships and other vessels carrying out illegal activities in Sierra Leone's coastal waters.

25. The Yenga boundary dispute between Sierra Leone and Guinea remained unresolved. On 26 March, the armed forces addressed a letter of protest to the Guinean Chief of Defence Staff regarding an incursion into Sierra Leonean territory by Guinean soldiers. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two countries remained cordial and high-level visits between senior Government officials continued.

C. Socio-economic developments

26. The economic situation in Sierra Leone continued to be challenging, owing mainly to the global economic downturn. However, Government revenues, which are still very low, began to rise with the introduction of a goods and services tax in January 2010. Non-tax revenues from mining, fisheries and communications also saw a marginal increase. However, the budget deficit increased in 2010, owing mainly to increased spending on the development of infrastructure. The Government also embarked on a major investment programme in feeder roads to improve market access for rural agricultural producers.

27. On 25 March, President Koroma launched Sierra Leone's first Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative report, with the vision of ensuring that wealth from natural resources would serve as an engine for sustainable development and poverty eradication. He further stated that there was a need for transparent accounting of extractive industry revenues. SLPP stated that oil contracts in the country's nascent oil sector should be more transparent.

28. Also during the reporting period, major mining concessions with London Mining and African Minerals Limited were signed by the Government and ratified by Parliament. These concessions are meant to exploit iron ore deposits in northern Sierra Leone, believed to be some of the largest in the world. The African Minerals Limited contract is estimated to cover an iron ore deposit of 10.5 billion tons. The contracts have drawn criticism from a number of observers, including civil society organizations, which claim that they violate the country's mining and tax laws and offer excessive concessions to the mining companies involved.

29. The Government rejected the allegations and maintained that the contracts would generate high revenues, spurring the country's economic development and creating employment opportunities for many Sierra Leoneans. The discovery and exploitation of such vast mineral resources, if properly managed, could indeed create desperately needed employment opportunities, especially for the younger generation, and reduce the need for international donor assistance.

30. On 27 April, President Koroma launched a free health-care programme for lactating mothers, pregnant women and children under the age of five to address Sierra Leone's poor infant and maternal mortality rates. The programme was supported by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Irish Aid and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes among which, for example, the World Health Organization provided blood banks and equipment to minimize transfusions of unsafe blood and implemented capacity-building programmes for health personnel.

III. Advancing peacebuilding

31. In March 2010, a delegation of the Peacebuilding Commission visited Sierra Leone and praised the progress made by the country since the end of the civil war. The delegation cited the experience of Sierra Leone as a successful example of multilateral peacebuilding. The delegation also noted that several significant challenges remained to be addressed before Sierra Leone could fully realize its long-term sustainable development aspirations. The Commission noted that continued international support remained vital for overcoming those final obstacles, in particular in preparation for the 2012 elections.

32. Since June 2009, the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission has aligned its activities with the Government's Agenda for Change, focusing on good governance and the rule of law, combating drug trafficking and addressing youth unemployment. Accordingly, a joint progress report on the implementation of the Government's Agenda for Change, prepared by the Government in full collaboration with its international partners and civil society, was submitted to the Peacebuilding Commission at its September session. The report was prepared following extensive consultations among and inputs from, various stakeholders, including the Government, donors, the United Nations and civil society.

33. The report indicates that while Sierra Leone is making steady progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Change, serious gaps and challenges remain, owing mainly to the lack of funding. It also reveals the need to address capacity constraints and the lack of coordination among various stakeholders, which are critical to ensuring the success of the Government's development strategy.

34. The Joint Vision for Sierra Leone of the United Nations Family was allocated almost $10 million from the "Delivering as one" fund. In coordination with the Government, the allocation was successfully channelled through the United Nations multi-donor trust fund for Sierra Leone into six programmes of the Joint Vision.

35. Regrettably, the trust fund has not attracted the level of support envisaged and the "Delivering as one" fund has therefore been essential in implementing the Joint Vision. The United Nations country team continues to follow up on options for mobilizing resources through the trust fund, but voluntary contributions from the donor community remain elusive. Apart from the allocation from the "Delivering as one" fund, only the Government of Canada has contributed to the trust fund to date.

IV. Support to democratic institutions

A. Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation

36. With the launch of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) on 15 June as an independent national broadcaster, United Nations Radio assets, including eight radio transmission sites and three broadcast studios, were transferred to the Corporation. The Government also provided a substantial amount of equipment for the new corporation. The integration of United Nations Radio staff into the new SLBC organizational structure is now complete. An $800,000 grant from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and an additional grant of $800,000

from the trust fund are being used to meet the technical and operational costs of the Corporation.

37. UNIPSIL continues to work very closely with SLBC to ensure that it is established on solid foundations, which will enable it to fulfil its role as an independent, professional and credible public broadcaster that is capable of sustaining itself.

B. Independent Media Commission

38. With UNIPSIL support, the Independent Media Commission is in the process of reviving the Guild of Editors as a forum for strengthening editorial capacity and improving professionalism. In discharging its media monitoring responsibilities, the Commission issued a statement on 9 July condemning inflammatory articles, with the potential to incite ethnic hatred and violence, in some local newspapers. The Commission emphasized the need for newspaper editors to adhere to its code of conduct. Technical and financial support for the Commission is envisaged in the election funding proposals being presented to international donors.

C. Decentralization

39. Progress in implementing the decentralization and devolution process remains slow. Almost six years after the decentralization reforms came into effect, only about 46 of 80 functions previously carried out by the central Government have been devolved to the local councils. Much remains to be done in the areas of capacity-building, infrastructure development and logistics support for the councils. At the same time, a Government fiscal transfer system has been set up and there has been a steady increase in grants transferred to local councils.

40. In June, the Government announced that District Officers would be reintroduced in 12 districts of the country. These officers will ensure effective chiefdom administration and governance and coordinate Government activities at the district level. District Officers have not been deployed to local councils administered by SLPP.

D. Parliament

41. The Parliament continued to perform its constitutional oversight functions and undertook field missions to inspect projects implemented by executive organs of the Government. Parliamentarians participated in the Open Government Initiative, a project funded by UNDP that provides constituents an opportunity to interact and raise concerns with parliamentarians. Parliament also passed legislation in a number of areas, including the regulation of small arms and telecommunications.

42. In August, the Parliament and the country's development partners established a parliamentary assistance coordination office to coordinate capacity-building activities. A tentative agreement was reached with the Government on funding for key parliamentary service personnel in the 2011 national budget as a first step towards establishing the eight administrative departments called for in the 2007 Parliamentary Service Act.

E. Political Parties Registration Commission

43. The Political Parties Registration Commission played an important role in monitoring the implementation of the joint communiqué signed on 2 April. With funding support from the Department for International Development, as well as strong support from the Government, the Commission was restructured during the reporting period, enabling it to recruit its own staff for the first time.

44. Capacity-building programmes for the restructured Commission were initiated and a review of its strategic plan commenced. However, a Chair of the Commission has yet to be appointed by the Government. The appointment is essential in that it will enable the Commission to fully undertake its responsibilities of monitoring the conduct of political parties and carrying out its mediation functions.

F. National Electoral Commission

45. During the reporting period, President Koroma reappointed Ms. Christiana Thorpe as Chair of the National Electoral Commission. SLPP objected to that reappointment on the grounds that they were not sufficiently consulted, and stated that under parliamentary procedures, the reappointment could not be approved because Ms. Thorpe was involved in litigation over the nullification of votes during the 2007 elections. However, the appointment was ratified by Parliament. In view of such challenges, and their potential impact on the work of the Commission and on preparations for the 2012 elections, UNIPSIL has engaged the opposition party and the Commission in efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution and agree on a way forward.

46. In May, the Commission finalized its 2011-2014 strategic plan, which covers a number of activities, including preparations for the 2012 elections, the strengthening of the Commission's infrastructure and improved engagement and coordination with electoral stakeholders. With regard to electoral law reforms, the Commission, in collaboration with PPRC and UNDP, organized a workshop on 15 June, where such issues as eligibility requirements for candidates, forfeiture of parliamentary seats, voter registration, voting procedures and the certification of election results were discussed. The workshop's recommendations will be submitted to the Attorney-General, the Minister of Justice and the Law Reform Commission for further consideration.

V. Human rights

A. National Human Rights Commission

47. On 3 August, the National Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone presented its third annual report to President Koroma. The report included recommendations on the administration of justice, children's and women's rights, mining and freedom of the press. The Commission continued to play a lead role in the protection of women's rights, the constitutional review process and the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, it continued to face challenges and a funding gap in the

implementation of its strategic plan. In particular, logistics constraints for its regional offices require urgent attention.

48. UNIPSIL continued its capacity-building support and provision of technical assistance and advice to the National Human Rights Commission, Government institutions, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. In collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa, Government ministries were trained on a rights-based approach to implement the Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision strategy.

49. UNIPSIL supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in finalizing the drafting of the common core document, which was adopted by the Government during the period under review. That document will enable the Government to meet its reporting obligations under international human rights treaties.

50. From 26 to 30 July, a team from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Freetown. The purpose of the visit was to review the requirements of UNIPSIL for its human rights work and to enhance coordination, taking into account the integrated nature of the presence and mandate of the United Nations in Sierra Leone.

B. Implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

51. Following the conclusion of a reparations project for victims of the conflict, implemented with financial assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund, the National Commission for Social Action launched a skills training project for female war victims, which was supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The project will provide skills training for 650 survivors of sexual violence that occurred during the war and microgrants for livelihood-generating activities.

52. However, funding shortfalls continue to affect the implementation of the reparations programme. A Victims Trust Fund established in December 2009 has so far, attracted only $25,000, which is being used to provide emergency medical support to victims. A project document has been drafted for a second allocation from the Peacebuilding Fund.

VI. Gender issues

53. On 8 June, President Koroma launched Sierra Leone's five-year national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The plan consists of five pillars: participation, prevention, prosecution, protection and promotion.

54. In his remarks of 27 May commemorating International Women's Day, President Koroma expressed his commitment to the 30 per cent quota for women in elective office and those holding positions in other governance institutions. He also apologized to women for the suffering inflicted on them during the conflict, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

55. A number of challenges in the promotion and protection of gender rights in Sierra Leone remain, including combating sexual and gender-based violence. These challenges are compounded by a lack of capacity in State institutions, high levels of illiteracy, especially in rural communities, and certain cultural practices.

VII. Special Court for Sierra Leone

A. Trial of Charles Taylor

56. The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor continued at the Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague. Thus far, 18 witnesses have testified on behalf of Mr. Taylor since he opened his defence in July 2009. The Trial Chamber is expected to render a judgement on merits in June 2011. A sentencing judgement, if applicable, will be delivered approximately six to eight weeks later, followed by appeals proceedings. Simultaneously, with the trial, the Special Court has initiated a drawdown of its staff as judicial milestones are reached.

B. Residual special court

57. The Government and the Management Committee of the Special Court have reached agreement on the establishment of a residual special court, which will be based in the Netherlands and begin functioning upon closure of the Special Court. The Parliament of Sierra Leone is expected to ratify the agreement in the near future.

58. The residual special court will be mandated to try the only remaining indictee still at large, Johnny Paul Koroma, if the case is not transferred to a national jurisdiction under rule 11 bis of the Court's Rules of Procedure and Evidence. It will maintain the archives of the Special Court; provide protection to witnesses and victims; respond to requests for evidence and claims for compensation by national prosecuting authorities; supervise the enforcement of sentences, and review convictions and acquittals.

VIII. Regional cooperation

59. Regional cooperation efforts continued during the reporting period. On 17 August, at a summit of Mano River Union Heads of State, held in Conakry, the interim President of Guinea, General Sekouba Konate, briefed the members on developments surrounding his country's elections and the run-off election scheduled for 19 September 2010.

60. The visiting Presidents also had joint meetings with a number of stakeholders, including ambassadors to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Prime Minister of Guinea and the two presidential candidates in the run-off election, whom they urged to continue to work to maintain law and order throughout the transition process.

61. An estimated 12,971 Guinean nationals in Sierra Leone voted in the 27 June elections, which were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. The National

Electoral Commission, the police and UNIPSIL provided technical and logistical support for the elections.

62. On 14 July, President Koroma handed over 18 acres of land around Lungi International Airport to ECOWAS for the establishment of a logistics depot and transit facility to be used for ECOWAS peace support operations. Also during the reporting period, the Sierra Leone Armed Forces participated in a multinational training exercise organized by ECOWAS under its Standby Force arrangements.

63. On 12 April, President Koroma received an ECOWAS delegation led by the Commission's Vice President which pledged its support for the implementation of the President's Agenda for Change, including $2 million for the implementation of some infrastructural projects.

IX. Main risks

A. Corruption

64. During the reporting period, the trial of the former Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources on charges of alleged corruption continued. On 22 July, President Koroma appointed Joseph Kamara, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as the new Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Mr. Kamara's appointment is subject to parliamentary approval.

65. On 6 July, the Acting Commissioner, Morlai Buya-Kamara, presented President Koroma with the Commission's 2009 annual report, which highlighted the Commission's achievements, which included the recovery of 2.8 billion leones; 11 criminal convictions; the construction of regional offices in Bo and Makeni; and the development of a partnership with civil society to monitor the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

66. Since the passing of the Anti-Corruption Act in 2008, the number of cases investigated by the Commission increased from 86 in 2008 to 122 in 2009 and to 117 in the first seven months of 2010. Moreover, five cases were prosecuted in 2008, nine in 2009 and four in the first seven months of 2010.

B. Illicit drugs

67. During the period under review, the Sierra Leone Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force was reconstituted as the Transnational Crime Unit. The establishment of the unit is in line with the West Africa Coast Initiative, the objective of which is to implement the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. Similar units will be established in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau and will closely coordinate their activities to fight drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa.

68. On 12 August, the Unit destroyed $1 million worth of cocaine, as well as 600 kilograms of marijuana. Numerous donors are providing funding and supporting capacity-building programmes for the Unit, such as Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

69. Substantial quantities of marijuana were impounded by the police during the reporting period. The existence of large marijuana farms in some districts continued to pose serious challenges for law enforcement authorities and underscored the regional dimensions of the problem. It also undermined Government efforts to promote local food security initiatives. The Government of Ireland has agreed to provide funding for the eradication of those farms.

C. Youth unemployment

70. Immense challenges remain in generating employment for young people, in particular in the current economic climate. An estimated 800,000 young people are unemployed, employed without remuneration or underemployed. A significant reversal of this situation will require increased international investment. Foreign investment in the mining and agricultural sectors is promising but has yet to generate large-scale employment for young people.

71. A chair has been appointed for the newly established National Youth Commission, which aims to initiate youth development programmes in collaboration with relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies. Renovation of its offices in Freetown and the identification of sites for regional offices are under way.

72. A three-year, $20 million project was initiated with World Bank funding and will target 18,000 young people to develop business and employment opportunities through apprenticeship schemes in the formal and informal sectors, business development support and other skills. Also under the project, about 30,000 young people will be employed in public works schemes to rehabilitate infrastructure vital to economic development.

X. Progress on the integration process

73. UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone continue to work together to integrate the political and developmental mandates of the mission. The yearly retreat of the country team and UNIPSIL will be held in the coming weeks to continue to implement the various elements of the United Nations Joint Vision, in accordance with the priorities and mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

XI. Observations and recommendations

74. Considerable progress has been made in Sierra Leone in consolidating peacebuilding and achieving national reconciliation. However, there is a need to ensure that the gains made in the peacebuilding process are not reversed. Endemic unemployment among young people is a challenge to the stability of the country. In addition, sustaining efforts at combating corruption is crucial. In that regard, I urge the Government to work towards ensuring that adequate resources are provided to support the efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

75. The recently concluded mining agreements give Sierra Leone hope for its future and the promise of financial self-sufficiency in the coming years. I am encouraged by the Government's efforts to work towards attaining the standards

established by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. However, in proceeding with the Government's plans to fully realize the benefits the country could gain from its natural resources, and in accordance with the country's laws, I urge a cautious approach in the implementation of arrangements for the exploitation of these resources. In that regard, the United Nations stands ready to provide the necessary assistance to the Government.

76. In the face of the global financial crisis, the challenge of securing significant funding has made the implementation of President Koroma's Agenda for Change extremely difficult. In need of support is the multi-donor trust fund for the implementation of the Joint Vision strategy, which is aligned with the Agenda for Change. The absence of funds for the implementation of the Agenda for Change and the Joint Vision has affected the Government's plans to promote more robust political and socio-economic development initiatives. In performing its core functions, I urge the Peacebuilding Commission to take the lead in helping to mobilize the necessary resources.

77. I commend President Koroma on the commitment of his Government to promote the rights of women and girls and launch the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). However, resources will be required to strengthen Family Support Unit offices located in police stations around the country, and related State institutions to enable them to adequately address sexual and gender-based violence. I also commend President Koroma for establishing a free health-care programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of 5, which will have a positive impact on efforts to address infant and maternal mortality in Sierra Leone.

78. The 2012 elections will be an important milestone in progressing towards the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone and a critical test for the country's electoral institutions, political leadership and political parties. In that regard, while the Government, political parties, national institutions and, indeed, the people of Sierra Leone will take the primary responsibility for the peaceful conduct and outcome of the elections, the international community would also be expected to play an important supportive role.

79. As we approach the 2012 elections, I call on the political parties, as major stakeholders, to continue to engage in dialogue and resolve their differences in the spirit of the joint communiqué of 2 April. I also urge the parties to adhere to the code of conduct of the Political Parties Registration Commission and work closely with the National Electoral Commission on arrangements for the 2012 elections.

80. I urge the Government to give priority consideration to accelerating the promotion of national cohesion and reconciliation. I also urge the Government to address the concerns of the country's stakeholders regarding the need for equal availability of opportunities to all citizens irrespective of ethnic or political affiliations. The announcement by the Government that it would hold an inquest into the executions of 29 December 1992 could have a negative impact on the peace consolidation process and undermine the balance established in the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement.

81. The developments in Guinea could have an impact on the Mano River Union countries of the subregion. At the same time, achievements in Sierra Leone must be complemented by parallel efforts to promote stability and address common

challenges in the Mano River Union countries. In that regard, I urge Sierra Leone's development partners to work closely with the Union.

82. Given the need for continued assistance to Sierra Leone in consolidating peace; providing support for the 2012 elections; creating conditions conducive to national reconciliation; advancing good governance reforms; combating corruption, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime; addressing youth unemployment; and mobilizing international donor support, in coordination with the Peacebuilding Commission, I recommend that the mandate of UNIPSIL be renewed for an additional one-year period. In the coming year, UNIPSIL will continue to implement its mandate within the framework of the Joint Vision and the priorities outlined in its previous mandate, with a particular focus on supporting the political and peace consolidation processes as the country prepares for the 2012 elections.

83. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to President Koroma and the Government of Sierra Leone for their support in enabling UNIPSIL to carry out its mandate. I would also like to express my gratitude to the staff of UNIPSIL and the United Nations system in Sierra Leone for their work in promoting peace and security in Sierra Leone under the able leadership of my Executive Representative, Michael von der Schulenburg. My sincere appreciation also goes to the invaluable contributions of Sierra Leone's international development partners, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.